

Note from the Editor

Youth (Sub)cultures in Changing Societies

This Special Issue of the journal 'Transition States and Societies' is a publication of selected papers from the conference 'Youth (Sub)cultures in Changing Societies', which took place at Tallinn University on February 3-4, 2011. The conference was looking for answers to questions of how rapid technological developments, structural changes in society and economic uncertainty influence the lifestyles of young people. Questions that derive from this include: Are youth cultures deviant or only distinctive lifestyles? What is the role of youth cultures in a multicultural society? What are the changes that international trends undergo when being diffused to new societies. The conference attracted 70 participants from different parts of the world – Australia, Asia, America and Europe. During the 3 days, there were 52 presentations including key-note speeches from influential contemporary authors on subculture literature such as Andy Bennett, Hilary Pilkington, Paul Hodkinson, Ross Haenfler and Patrick Williams.

Selected peer-reviewed papers give a good overview of the topics covered during the conference. One of the relevant questions throughout the conference was the possible deviant behaviour associated with youth (sub)cultures. The first article by Patrick William addresses this topic by studying how subcultural youth are framed in the media output of transitional societies and explains that youth subcultures have been cast as the cultural 'other' in news reports in media societies. He argues that the study of media should recognise three distinct social forces at work in creating moral panics: social cognition, semiotics, and political economy. The second article by Daniel Briggs and Tim Turner focuses on British young people's drinking habits on holidays. As British youth have a reputation for binge drinking and being engaged in different risk behaviours, there is much concern about their activities abroad. This ethnographic study gives picturesque insight into young people's experiences and the meanings they attach to their behaviour. They conclude that deviant, risk-taking behaviour in holidays can be interpreted as a 'wild zone' and a brief hiatus from the banality of work and family constraints in everyday life.

Nowadays in a globalised world, technological developments enable the rapid spread of worldviews to different locations and also provide new spaces for communication and self-expression. The third article by Jamie Leigh Ruse is about gendered identities in Mexico, where traditional worldviews and gender roles are challenged by global modernity. This in turn influences Mexican society through a highly developed tourist industry and new online social worlds. The fifth article by Andra Siibak and Patrick Hernwall analyses how teenage girls in Estonia and Sweden discover their gender identities while selecting profile images for social networking sites. Both of these articles discuss negotiated gender identities for young people. In Mexico, young people try to cope with the changing social order, while the online visual presentations of Estonian and Swedish girls are connected to learning the norms and values of contemporary society.

Subcultural trends have rather different meanings depending on background and context. The fourth article by Jānis Daugavietis and Ilze Lāce investigates subcultural music tastes in Latvia, and the last article by Rene Mäe and myself analyses DIY practices in Estonia, focusing on small-scale music festival organisers. Both articles, although on slightly different topics and using different methodology, emphasise the distinctive position of subcultures in small Post-Soviet countries like Latvia and Estonia compared to Western Societies.

The conference as well as this special issue is part of research project ETF7331 *Youth Subcultures and Lifestyles in Estonia. Where does the boundary between distinctive and deviant behaviour lie?*

Airi-Alina Allaste, Guest Editor